

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to assist special and vocational educators, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and other adult service agency providers in building effective transition partnerships, coordinating and implementing quality transition services, and increasing successful post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.

Transition partnerships that are flexible, focus on the interests and needs of the student, and coordinate the actual provision of services prior to graduation, will result in more successful post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. School district personnel however, are often not aware of the services that outside agencies may be able to provide; when to include them in the transition planning process; or exactly how to contact these agencies when a student may need additional services and supports. Therefore, the purpose of this guide is to promote a better understanding among all partners in the transition process and clarify partner's roles and responsibilities in working together to provide transition services for students with disabilities.

"Making A Positive Difference through Transition Services: A Guide", focuses on the following:

- flexible, collaborative transition planning and service delivery among the following partners: local school districts, vocational technical career centers, vocational rehabilitation, community rehabilitation programs, supported employment service providers, and centers for independent living;
- each partner's roles and responsibilities in the provision of transition services at the local level;
- the identification of "post school outcomes" as a part of the IEP process and clarification of language outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 1997 Amendments to include concrete examples of "transition service needs", "needed transition services", and "activities/strategies" that will assist the student in planning for the future, living independently, and becoming a good self-advocate.
- the process by which students can be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and other adult service agency providers.
- the provision of specific VR services for all Missouri students who require services as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997, Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act, the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998; that complement but do not take the place of services provided by the local school districts, colleges or universities, and other adult service agencies can be provision of timely and uniform statewide VR services.

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How will we know if transition services have made a positive difference for students with disabilities, or if transition partnerships have been effective? This is a very good question. As required by IDEA 1997, Missouri has established performance goals for students with disabilities. The performance goals and indicators that have been developed for students with disabilities mirror the goals and indicators for all students. Those performance goals/indicators related to secondary transition are as follows:

- The percentage of students with disabilities scoring at Step 1 and Progressing achievement level will decrease, while the percentage of students with disabilities scoring at Proficient and Advanced levels will increase for each of the MAP subject area assessments.
- The percentage of students with disabilities graduating with a regular diploma will increase.
- The percentage of students with disabilities that drop out of school will decrease.
- The percentage of students with disabilities participating in vocational preparation programs is consistent with the percentage of participation in the general population of students.
- The percentage of students with disabilities employed or enrolled in continuing education six months post vocational training will increase or be maintained at a high level.
- The percentage of students with disabilities employed or enrolled in continuing education six months post graduation will increase or be maintained at a high level.

In addition to the specific performance goals and indicators outlined by the Division of Special Education, included below is a list of some of the student outcomes that have been targeted by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as a way of measuring the success and effectiveness of Vocational Rehabilitation services prior to graduation for students with disabilities:

- The number of students with disabilities referred to Vocational Rehabilitation for transition services, prior to graduation or exit from school will increase.
- The number of school districts and students with disabilities participating in the Cooperative Work Experience Program (COOP) through Vocational Rehabilitation will increase.
- The number of students with disabilities appropriately referred to and successfully completing training programs offered through vocational technical career schools, who also received Vocational Rehabilitation services will increase.
- The number of students with disabilities graduating with a regular high school diploma, who received transition services from Vocational Rehabilitation will increase.

- o Access to and success in post-secondary training/education environments for students with disabilities who have received transition services from Vocational Rehabilitation will increase.
- o Access to full time, higher paying jobs with benefits, immediately upon graduation or after additional post-secondary training for students with disabilities who received services from Vocational Rehabilitation will increase.

Through a better understanding of the type of services that Vocational Rehabilitation and just a few of the other agencies that partner closely with VR and schools may be able to provide to students; more effective transition planning may occur *prior* to the student's graduation or exit from school, gaps and delays from school to post school activities may be minimized, and outcomes for students with disabilities not only in the area of employment and post-secondary education/training, but independent living, may be more successful.

Although this guide targets educators and other professionals, it is important to remember that it is the student and their families that are the most important partners in the transition planning process. If other partners can begin to "get on the same page", and understand what each other can bring to the transition planning process, services will be more effective and make a greater difference for students.

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If you remember the starfish story, an older man is walking along a beach where hundreds of starfish have washed up on shore, and he watches as a young boy reaches down and picks up these starfish one by one and throws them back into the ocean. The older man approaches the young boy questioning his actions, stating that with all of the hundreds of starfish that had washed up on shore, he could not possibly make a difference. The young boy reaches down, picks up another starfish, throws it into the ocean, and states, "I made a difference to that one".

The young boy may not have been able to make a difference to all of the starfish that washed up on the beach, but he was able to make a difference for a few. We, as partners in the transition process may not be able to make a difference for all students with disabilities, but by providing quality transition planning and services, we may be able to make a positive difference for many students with disabilities as they strive to reach their goals and dreams beyond high school.

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